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C O N F I D E N T I A L RIYADH 002025

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SUBJECT: "PRETTY IN PINK" - FAIZAH RAFSANJANI

(U) CLASSIFIED BY A/DCM JOHN MORAN FOR REASON 1.5 (B) AND (D)

11. (U) FAIZAH RAFSANJANI, DAUGHTER OF FORMER IRANIAN PRESIDENT

HASHEMI RAFSANJANI, VISITED SAUDI ARABIA JUNE 13-14 IN HER OFFICIAL ROLE AS DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF IRAN'S NATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE AND CALLED FOR COOPERATION AMONG SAUDI AND IRANIAN WOMEN IN VARIOUS FIELDS. SHE PAID A FORMAL CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD AL-FAISAL AND HAD A WORKING VISIT WITH SULTAN BIN FAHD, VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL PRESIDENCY OF YOUTH WELFARE, AN ORGANIZATION THAT OVERSEES ALL SPORTS PROGRAMS, CULTURAL CLUBS, WRITERS SOCIETIES, AND A PANOPLY OF LITERARY AND ARTS MAGAZINES. SHE ALSO VISITED KING SAUD UNIVERSITY, KING ABDULAZIZ LIBRARY, AND THE PRINCE SALMAN SOCIAL CENTER.

12. (C) AT A PRIVATE RIYADH DINNER ON JUNE 13 THROWN BY THE WIFE OF CROWN PRINCE ABDULLAH, HUSSA AL-SHA'ALAN, MS. RAFSANJANI SPENT 30 MINUTES TALKING TO THE HOSTESS INCOGNITO, DUE TO THE FACT THAT HER CHANGED ATTIRE MADE HER UNRECOGNIZABLE. EMBOFF AND OTHER WOMEN ATTENDING THE SOIREE DID NOT RECOGNIZE MS. RAFSANJANI, WHO APPEARED IN A SPORTY PANTS SUIT A LA MELROSE PLACE AND SHORT HAIRCUT, AS THE SAME PERSON WHO WAS SHOWN THAT DAY ON SAUDI TV NEWS, COMPLETELY SWATHED IN BLACK, CONFERRING FORMALLY WITH SAUDI OFFICIALS.

13. (U) COMMENT: ONE OF THE VERY FEW FEMALE EMISSARIES IN THE ISLAMIC/ARAB WORLD, MS. RAFSANJANI VISITED SAUDI ARABIA IN 1992, AND ACCOMPANIED HER FATHER ON HIS MARCH 1998 TRIP, WHICH INCLUDED PERFORMING UMRA AT MECCA. WELL RESPECTED AS A MEMBER OF THE IRANIAN SHURA COUNCIL (TEHRAN) AND EDITOR OF "WOMAN" MAGAZINE, SHE IS GUARANTEED ACCESS AND CIRCULATION IN GULF DIPLOMATIC AND POLITICAL CIRCLES WITH HER NEW OLYMPIC PORTFOLIO. GIVEN THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SAUDI PRESIDENCY OF YOUTH WELFARE AS A QUASI-MINISTRY AND THE IMPORTANT ROLE THAT SPORTS PLAY--ESPECIALLY SOCCER--AS A SANCTIONED ENTERTAINMENT AND SOCIAL "STEAM VALVE," MS. RAFSANJANI'S JUNE 17 REMARKS IN "AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT" NEWSPAPER CALLING FOR WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVING THE IMAGE OF THE MUSLIM WOMAN IN THE WEST SHOULD BE VIEWED AS CARRYING THE IMPRIMATUR OF BOTH THE IRANIAN AND SAUDI GOVERNMENTS. HER VISITS TO SAUDI ARABIA MAY INCREASE IN THE BACKDRAFT OF THE RECENT VISITS OF IRANIAN PRESIDENT KHATAMI AND SAUDI DEFMIN SULTAN. NOTE: MS. RAFSANJANI WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE "WOMEN'S SPORTS SOLIDARITY COUNCIL," WHICH INCLUDES 40 ISLAMIC COUNTRIES.

FOWLER